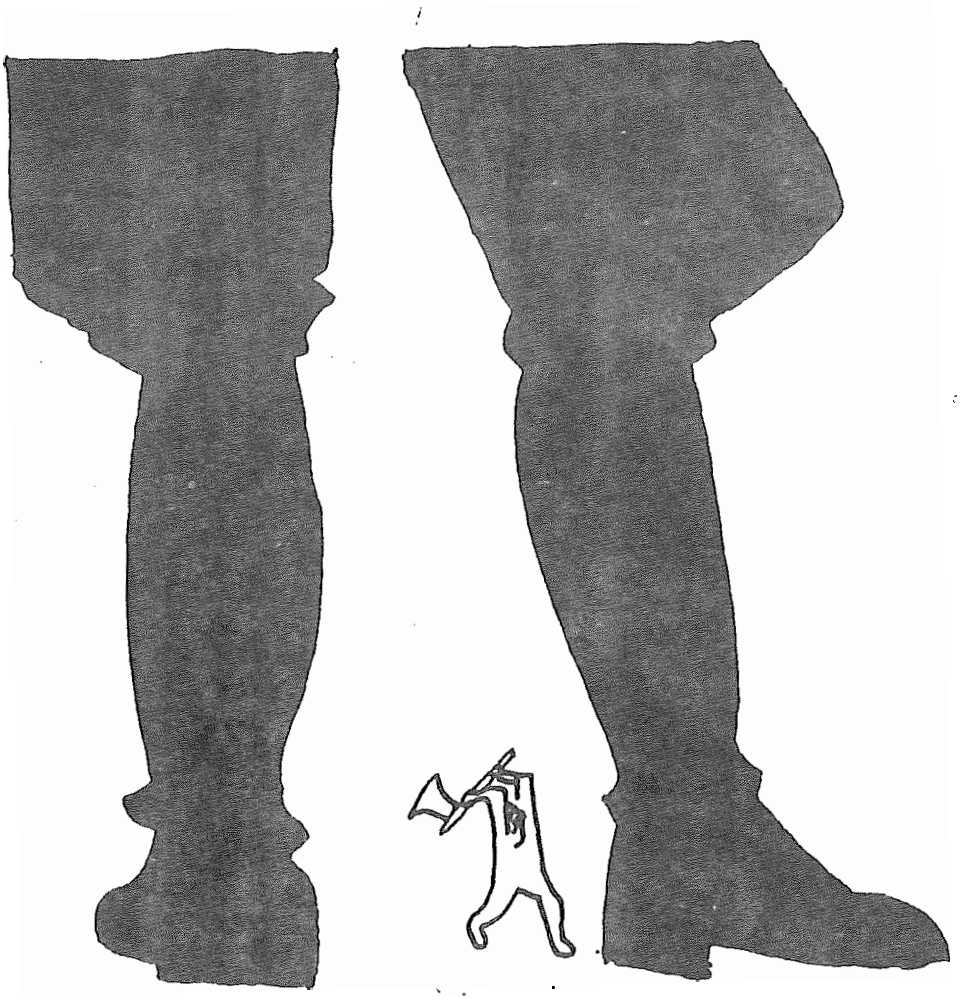
PLEASE YOURSELF



REVOLUTIONARY MANIFESTO AND DECLARATION OF WAR -- SELF MANAGEMENT GROUP OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

PREFACE

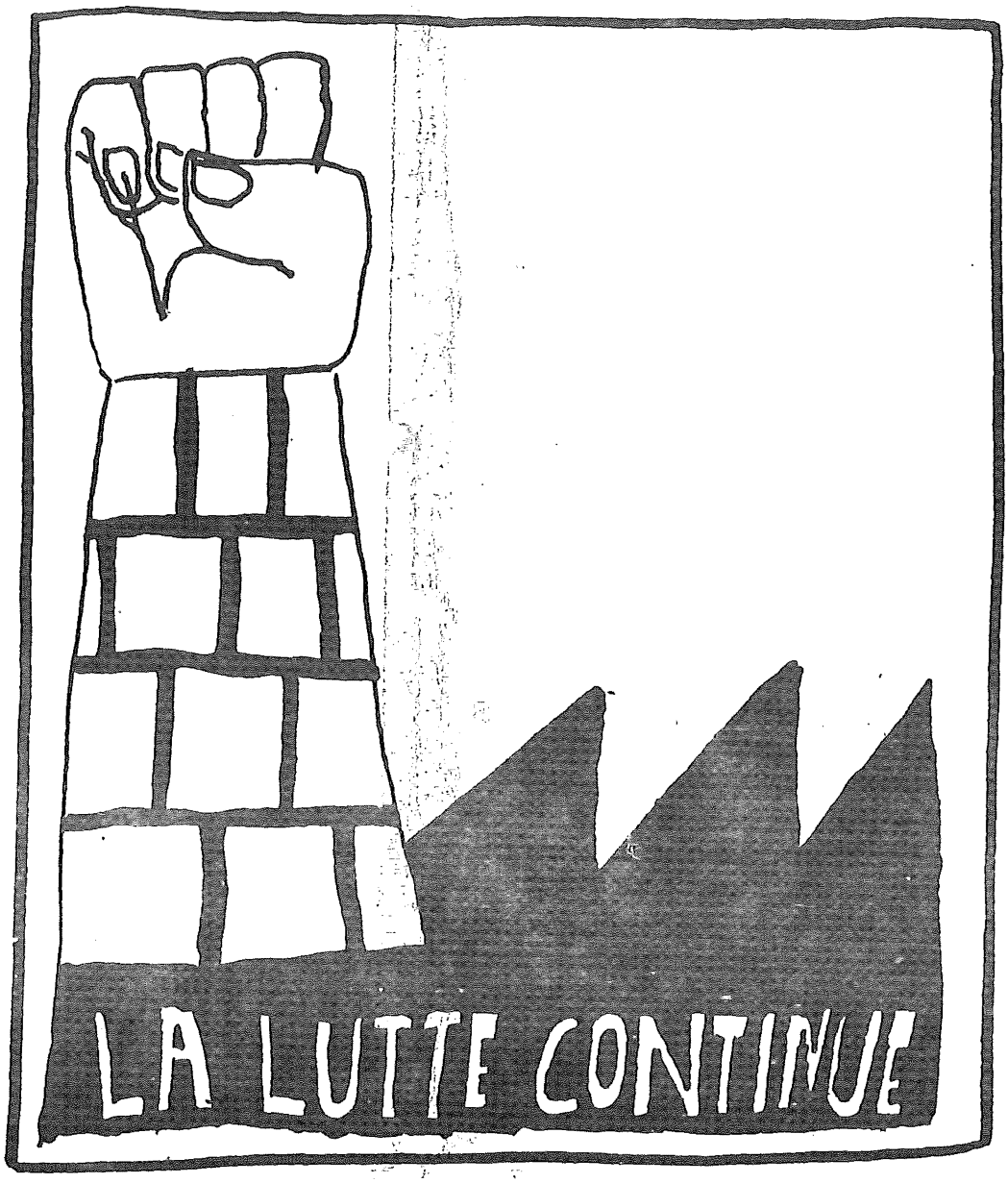
The publication of this manifesto is the first phase in the revolutionary project of the Self-Management Group of Western Australia. We have attempted, here to expose the society we seek to transform, to define some of the things we see as oppressive.

At no stage does this document pretend to be a total, comprehensive critique of capitalism. There is much we have only touched on and much we have excluded completely, for the sake of brevity and lucidity. We make no apologies for this ephemerality. We intend this pamphlet only as an initiator of discussion and, we hope, action.

To explain fully our ideas and theories would take a considerably larger volume than this one. Indeed, men such as Marx and Bakunin have devoted their entire lives to laying the theoretical groundwork for revolution. For this we are indebted to them, but now is a time for action. Practice must find its theory. The new society will be built in the struggle against the old.

This document is by no means definitive. Our politics are dynamic rather than dogmatic. We invite your criticism.

"That which is not superceded rots; that which rots incites to supercession". – Raoul Vaneigem



THE BEGINNING THE WAR OF FREE LIFE AGAINST MECHANISED AUTHORITY

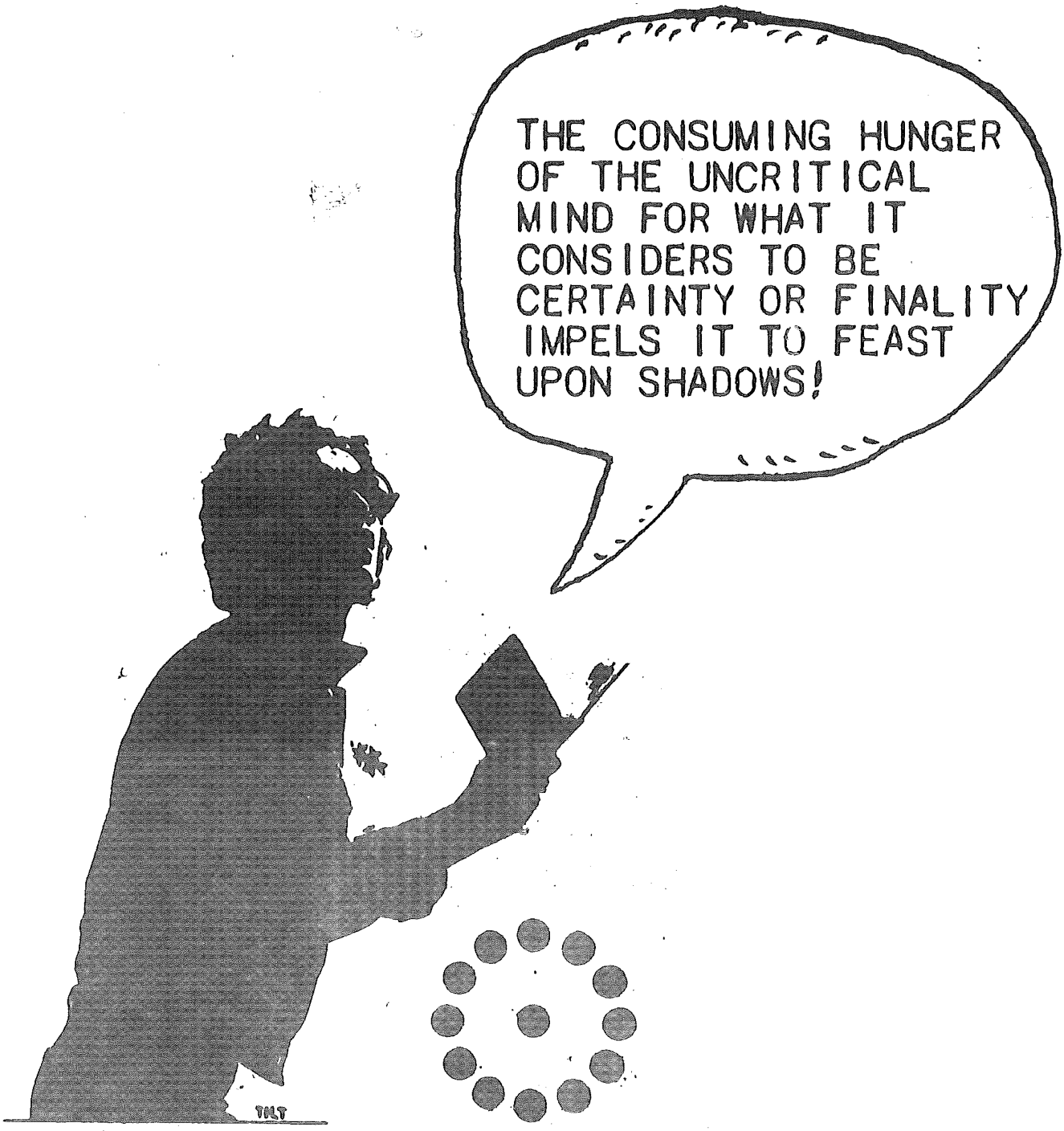
We are the most negative political group in Western Australia. We confront the whole of our society, the delicate fabric of economics, moral, social, political, religious and ideological forces, and our one desire is to tear it down.

Life against the living death. Rejecting totally the political theological, literary, philosophical and academic assumptions which hinge our society to the withered refrigerator of present day civilisation — which in any case are rooted in class interest and the mind-morgue of the university — and insisting moreover on our own irresistable emotional autonomy we find it essential to affirm here and now without reservation and at any price the marvellous black and red validity of absolute revolt.

We look behind the glittering tinsel of shop window dressing and see the long dirty alleyways with their bins of filth just as we look behind the appearance of society and see the steadily climbing rates of mental illness, alcoholism, baby bashings, suicides and drug addiction that show on graphs what all of us feel directly, consciously or not, the human misery generated by a society that is hopelessly sick.

We take the negative line and try to tear it down. Others take a more positive line. They see the same things as us and say they feel them just as strongly but try and set things right by tryin to improve institutions and laws so that they will care a little better about the poor humans caught up in them. Some of these people are genuine, many are in the pay of those that control our lives and organise our boredom. Even when they succeed in lightening a particularly heavy burden from the peoples backs it is always achieved through the "right channels" and never by social revolution, never by confronting people with their own powerlessness and therefore, with each reformist victory the state is strengthened and the chill breath of state manipulation breathes a little heavier down our necks.

OH! NO! NOT HER! WITH HER SENSE OF DUTY AND SACRIFICE SHE MIGHT AS WELL BE A CATHOLIC!
HI, WALLY!..
WHAT TIME WILL YOU PICK ME UP TONIGHT?
YOU ASKED TO TAKE ME TO THE PEACE RALLY-- REMEMBER?
WHY SHOULD I WASTE MY TIME GOING TO ONE OF YOUR FEEBLE, GUILT-RIDDEN CIRCUSES.
WHAT? YOU MEAN YOU DON'T SUPPORT THE NLF?
SORRY... I DON'T CHOOSE BETWEEN BUREAUCRATS!
WE FIGHT FOR OURSELVES OR WE DON'T FIGHT AT ALL!


THE CONSUMING HUNGER OF THE UNCRITICAL MIND FOR WHAT IT CONSIDERS TO BE CERTAINTY OR FINALITY IMPELS IT TO FEAST UPON SHADOWS!

PROPAGANDA – EDUCATION FOR REVOLUTION

Negative and positive, destruction and creation, all are one process and we intend to utterly destroy the old world by the building of the new.

The real work of the revolution is done over the years in the factories, offices, schools and universities, on street corners, and in the home. The social revolution is only the culmination of all this. It is the final expression of people throwing off authority which they no longer need. The revolutions of the past have failed miserably because the people had not reached this stage. It is our task to propagate the idea that you do not need authority, to kindle the flame of revolt, and when enough people have courage to live without leaders, bosses, policemen and priests, and the whole apparatus of power and corruption, coercion and conformism, racialism and religion, fear and cruelty, and the misery that it produces will be swept away. The people will make the social revolution, the goal is total self-management, by any means necessary.

It is up to you to live the revolution.

All of us are affected by authority and all of us have the power to undermine it where it touches us.

CAPITAL

Capital is dead labour. It is the accumulated wealth of things that humanity has built up over centuries of toil and sweat. It is the factories, railways, ships, houses, buildings and cities, that we, the working men and women, have made.

Capitalism is that system of coercion, found in every part of the modern world, in which this wealth, that could be used to make life satisfying and meaningful is expropriated by and controlled by a small group of capitalists and bureaucrats. These parasites, while they control privately what is the work of generations, are guilty of a monumental act of theft. All properties, after all theft.

The capitalist, however, even as he calls this accumulated labour "his" is enslaved by it, by the order of commodity production upon which it all must rest. The capitalist is not free to do what he wants with "his" capital. He just has the best seat on a tobboggan that has long been out of control.

Capitalism has now reached a dead end. Its revolutionary days, when it freed itself and humanity from the yoke of fuedalism are over. Having nowhere to go it turns its spiteful senility upon all that is still young hopeful, beautiful, and rebellious. Our spirits are suffocated in its schools, factories, and offices doing menial tasks that could mostly be automated and probably would not need to be done in a sane society anyway.

Colour and life are smothered in the folds of its soul-destroying greyness. In order to live we are forced to become part of the machine. Humanity divided into order givers and order takers with all reduced to insignificance by the meanness and pettyness of it all. The canker — capitalism — dead labour — dominates living beings. The past takes precedence over the present.

Yet the monster has its soft under belly into which we may attempt to drive our at present flimsy stakes. It is that all the things it denies and perverts by its advertising and gimmickry — adventure, romance, freedom, beauty, love, pride and control over our own lives — must now be found outside the system. As nuetrality is made impossible by the overwhelming totality of capitalism so they can only be gained by the resistance to it and the struggle against it — in the revolution.

ENEMIES OF THE STATE

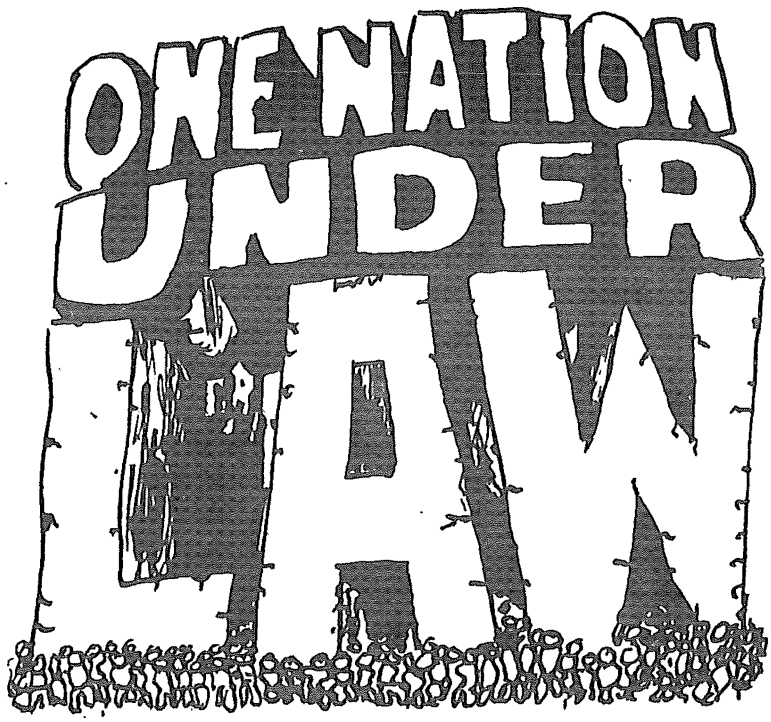
The state is the means by which the dominant group in society keeps down the oppressed — it is the defence mechanism of the ruling class.

Th conflict between the various classes generates the state as the means by which the capitalists preserve their property and their stability. The state is always biased from the point of view of the bureaucrats that serve it, and in the state capitalist countries (Russia, China, etc.) these two the state and the bureaucrats, have been fused together to form the most perfected form of repression yet devised.

The state is a product of class society and when we destroy class society we must destroy the state as well, otherwise we are merely creating another priviledged group to rule over us.

Specifically, the state consists of the violent and coercive institutions of society — The army, navy and airforce for external aggression and defence (although during times of rebellion they are used against the workers as well), the police and prison system for internal security, the civil service for government and organised robbery and the law to give it all a veneer of constitutional respectability.

We lok to the future as a time humanity will organise itself in a decentralised society and when human relations, person to person and group to group will proceed from a policy of common need, solidarity and mutual aid constantly growing and developing without fetters or restrictions, that is, without the state.



AGAINST THE LAW

The violence of the individual against society is called a crime.

The volence of society against the individual is called law.

Our rebellion, conscious or unconscious, immediately comes up against the first of societies' protective devices — the law. So it was when we marched against the obscenity that was the Vietnam War. So it was when we protested against apartheid in South Africa and watched our brothers and sisters clubbed down by the police. So it was when we started to smoke dope and saw person after person taken from us and put inside until many outstations began to look like concentration camps for the young. So it is now that the people are beginning to turn against the yankee war machine in this country. And so it will be now that our revolt has become conscious and we are trying to change the world to fit us rather than change ourselves to fit the world.

The law is violence directed against us. It says "obey or we will take away your freedom". The law is not there to protect us or to help old ladies cross roads but to protect the property of the rich and to preserve the order which rests upon the production and sale of commodities.

All who serve the law, from the "prison officer" to the high court judge to the parliamentarians who make the laws in the first place are equally screws. They make their living by turning keys on their fellow men. They are all to be despised equally. Perhaps, however, our particular disdain should fall upon the cops and prison warders. What sort of person could spend his life locking up others? They are to be condemned also because most of them come from our class and are siding, in reality, against their own interests and with the oppressors.

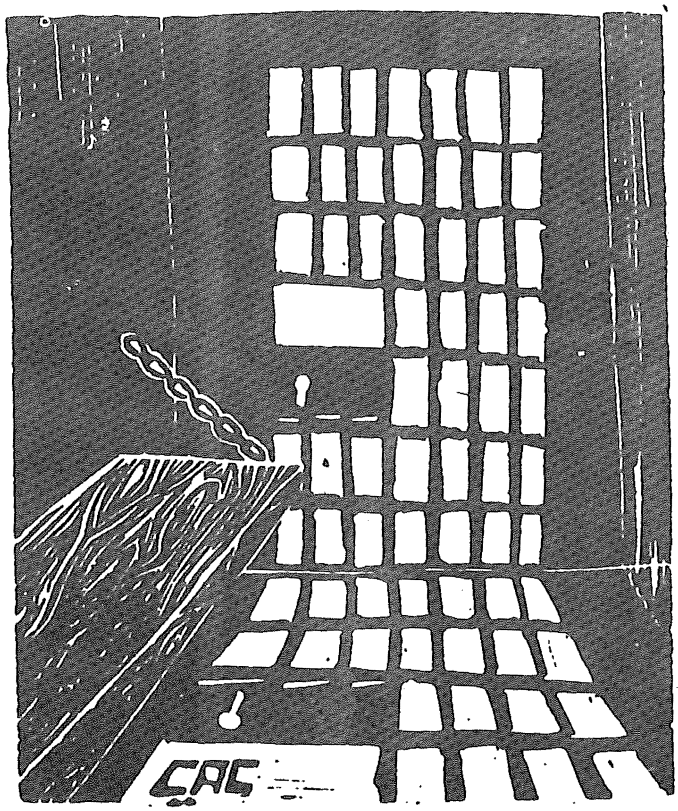
Judicial impartiality is a fraud. It's obscene for some middle class moralistic twit, who cannot know anything of life or what it is to be poor, or of rebellion, adventure or love, to sit and pass judgement upon us.

"Justice" works on clear class lines. Not only are the sympathies of the officials with their peer group but also the law is inevitably directed against the poor (how many company directors have been charged with sleeping under bridges). Also to the rich belong the resources with which they can buy a better hearing through good lawyers, solicitors, even bribes. If you still think our judicial system is fair then compare the number of aboriginals inside Fremantle Prison with the number attending University.

Crime is the individual's unconscious reaction against his tormentors. Where it does not inflict injury upon people, as in shoplifting, bankrobbery, vandalism against bourgeois property, etc., it should be encouraged, as should all resistance. It is useless against the system as a whole, however, unless it is done collectively and the proceeds channelled into revolutionary causes (e.g. arming yourself to put yourself on an equal, or partyly equal level with the police). But it is fun, it shows that they have not broken everyone's spirit yet, it gets rid of frustrations and it can be quite profitable if done with enough care and nerve. The crime detection rate gives you better than a fifty-fifty chance.

Eventually we must steal the whole world.

Where oppression is law, revolution is order.



AGAINST NATIONALISM

To protect nations you must have armies, with armies you have wars. So long as you have nations you will have wars. The myth that state socialism can put an end to war is shown up for the utipianism that it is by the heavy troop build up along the Sino-Soviet border and by the various military interventions of Russia in eastern Europe.

The working people of one country have the same economic and social interests as those in another. When they fight in national wars they are fighting and dying for their exploiters.

We are not nationalists and are completely unpatriotic. The human species with its infinite ingenuity will develop, as it has done in the past, countless local variations in culture, language, etc. and these will develop more naturally and with greater freedom without the restrictions of state control and without the necessity of having to die in order to prove that one variation in human culture is better than another.

We are citizens of the world, which is another way of saying that we accept no citizenship and no loyalties, other than to ourselves, our class and our cause – freedom. There is no contradiction between these loyalties.

AGAINST THE BOMB

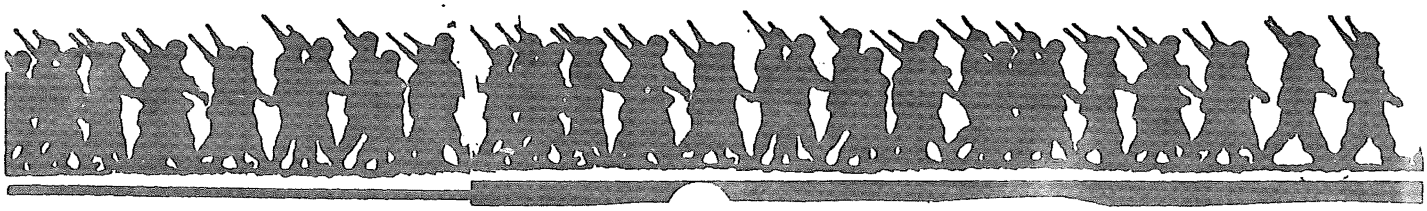
The supreme reality facing the world today, even if the "trendies" hae forgotten it, is still the immediate possiblity of us all getting wiped out. The world is still divided up into power blocks which between them have enough nuclear explosives to destroy every human on this planet several times over.

Looking at the people who hold this power, the ultimate power, we should be scared stiff. Nixon and Agnew on one side, whose pettyness goes so far as to involve private tax swindles. Business leaders and politicians have little to fear, being able to retreat to their private funk holes three miles below the surface, should anything go wrong.

Of the other side we should let their actions speak for themselves. The invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the militarism that pervades the whole system, the blunt hunger for power and the search for markets.

The politicians, all of them, risk our lives in their deadly games of bluff and counter-bluff. These serve the interests of both sets of rulers, because it gives them a false opposition to hold before and terrify their subjects with. They must be disarmed as a task of great urgency.

The old CND ban-the-bomb marchers were right in some ways but in most cases their analysis was one dimensional in that they did not look beyond the present reality. Many were pacifists and seemed to think that the politicians would give up their toys if they asked them nicely enough or if enough of them sat down in the streets. Others were just plain supporters of the state-capitalists in the Soviet Union. We must go farther than they. Our revolution must destroy all power, and its chattels, so that there is some hope of a future on this planet.



AGAINST THE MILITARY

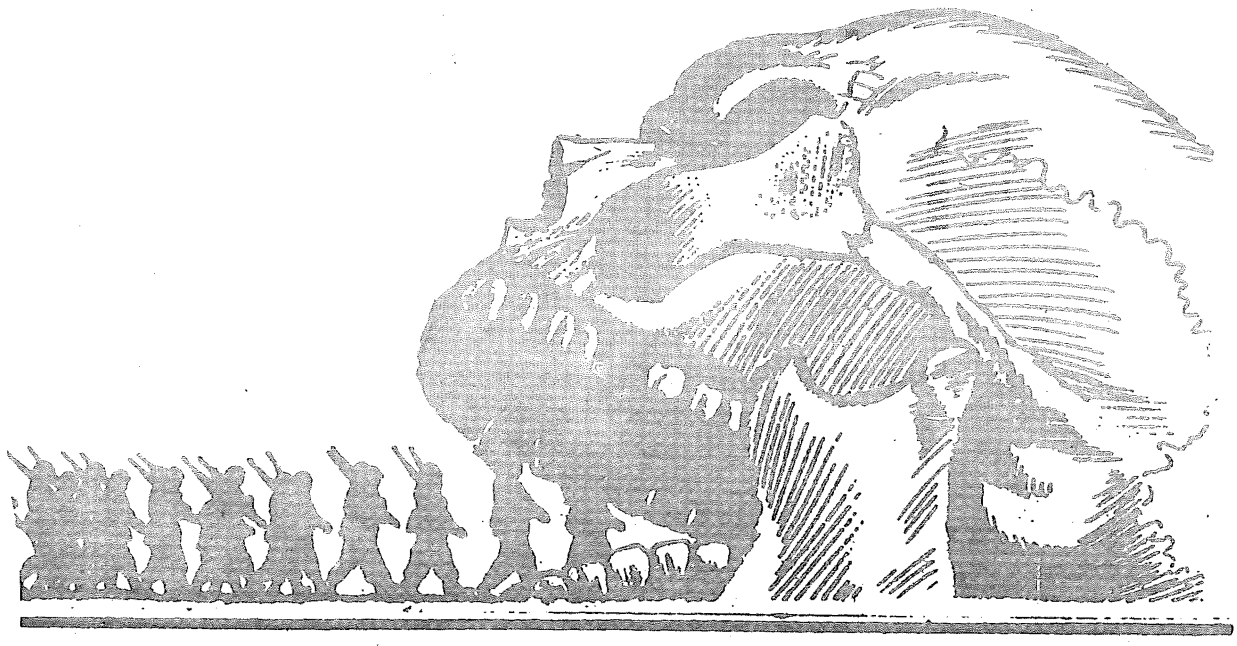
Armies are not expensively armed and trained so as to keep the peace. The existence of armies presupposes the possibility of war. The ruling class accuses us anarchists of being advocates of chaos, but in fact their system has again and again, in World Wars One and Two, in Korea and in Vietnam, shown us that as far as chaos and the destruction of lives and property are concerned, it is unrivalled.

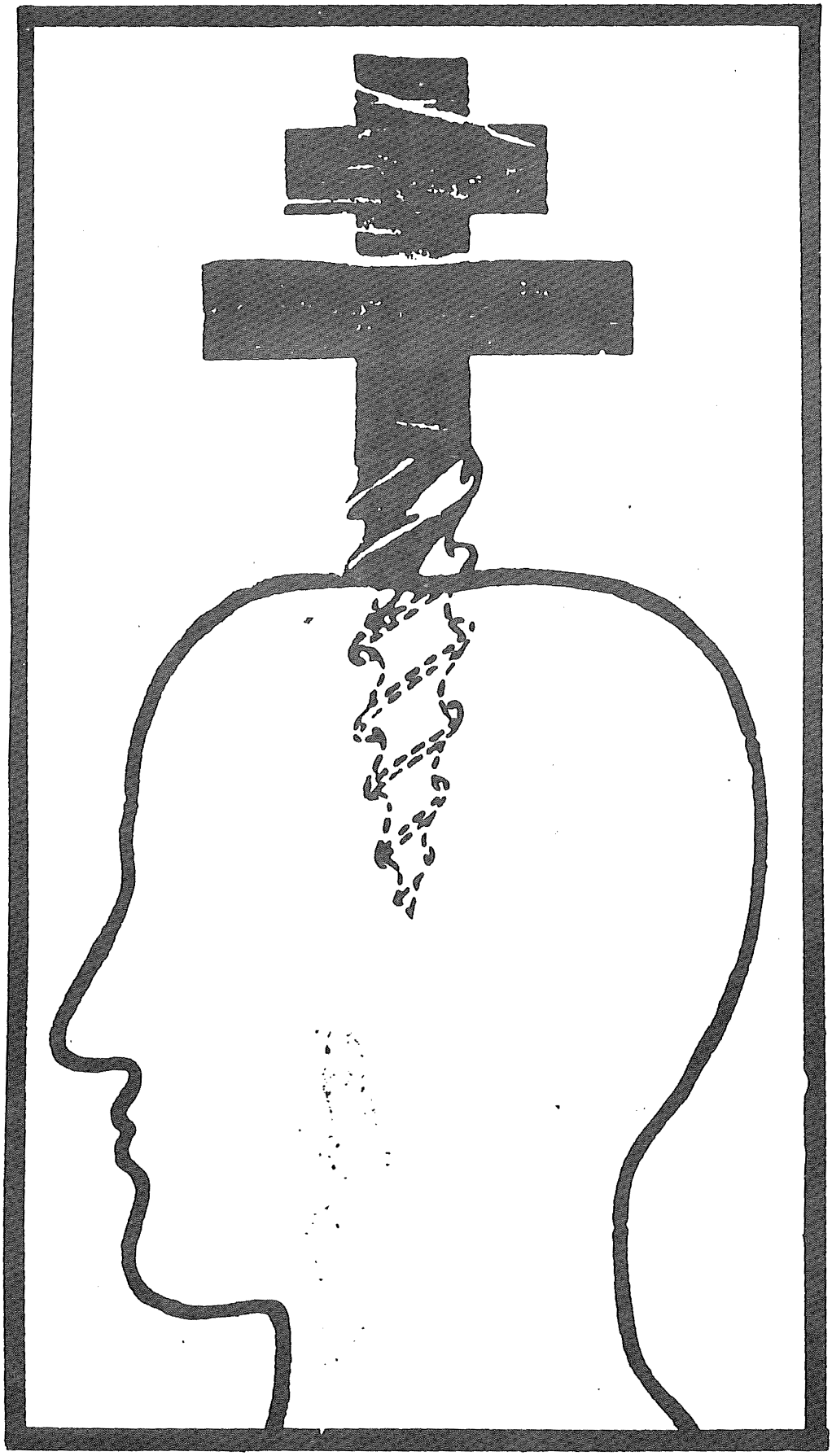
It is in the armed services that uniforms and uniformity, the giving and taking of orders, the discipline and the servility, in fact everything that is opposed to freedom is found.

We set as one of our first objectives the exposure of the services to the public. To start anti-recruitment drives, to encourage and support dissident groups within the army and to provide help and support to deserters. Eventually we should aim at putting our own members into the ranks to sow dissent and insubordination.

The disbanding of the army and its ex-members joining the worker's militias will enable the workers councils an armed critique of society, the access and use by the general assemblies of the rank and file when they have expropriated the expropriators.

So long as the arymy remains loyal to the bourgeoisie the possibility of successful revolution remains remote.





THE INVISIBLE TYRANNY OF CONDITIONING

From the moment we are born the process of social conditioning commences. At birth, the human animal is faced with a maximum number of possibilities. The next twenty years of its life is a process of limitation of these possibilities, until we emerge from the grist mill of education with only one road open:— to live out our lives in total, passive subserience to the boredom and misery of daily life. All the other roads have been blocked off or destroyed.

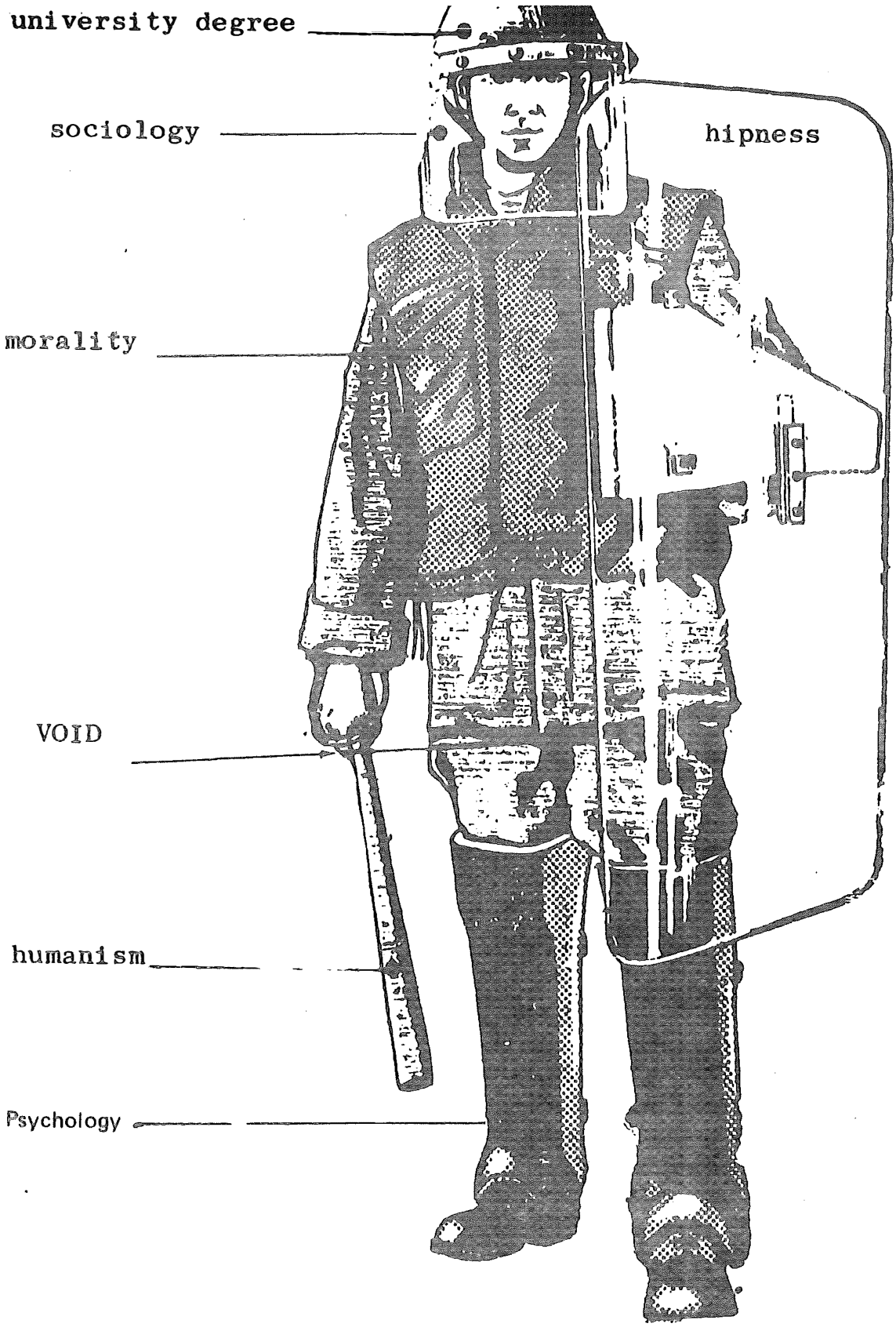
We reject the theory that certain human beings are naturally superior to others, that intelligence, ingenuity, and creativity are congenital or hereditary traits. The environment to which a person is subjected, both material and emotional, is the factor which determines the type of person he/she is likely to be. In short, there is no such thing as human nature. Each and every one of us is the product of a complex system of social conditioning, which stems from the basic necessity for capitalism to continually expand and reproduce itself in order to remain in existence.

The first conditioning factor in our lives is the patriarchal family. In the family situation, the child is given an image, in the form of a mother and father, in which he recognises himself. He is expected to "take after" his parents, who, either consciously or unconsciously, impart to their children the lessons of their own childhood. In the family, the first seeds of "morality" are sown. The child is taught to be ashamed of his own body, to be seen and not heard, to love, hate, fear and trust without question. Basic comsumerism is imbued, in such things as Santa Claus and Easter Bunny. And when he is old enough, he is sat in front of the television, and brainwashing commences in earnest.

The monogamous, patriarchal family is the basic repressive structure in modern society. For too long it has been regarded as a sacred institution, and many revolutionary movements have for this reason failed to call it into question. However, a radical transformation of society can only be complete when we are able to view rationally every facet of our existence.

From the control of the patriarchal family the child moves into the education system. The one unconscious aim of education is the total destruction of any creative ability the family may have left behind. The image of the parent is moved aside, and the teacher becomes another image of authority. Once a child is taught to read and write, the education process becomes one of the accumulation of useless facts. As well as this, more morality is drummed in. "Character building", "self-discipline", "citizenship" become the slick disguises for indoctrination in servility and conformity. Twelve years of it. Twelve years of mindless character destruction, twelve years of utter bullshit. A bewildered child, unable to understand the process he is being put through, rebels and lashes out aimlessly. He is said to have "personality problems", "identity crises", or some other bit of psychological jargon, and is placed in special remedial classes, to intensify conditioning.

All the time the television is blaring in the background, teaching commodity consciousness and the subtleties of consumerism. We are brainwashed into thinking that we have not been brainwashed. We are given the illusion of free choice, when in reality all we have is the free choice of illusions. After twelve years of education we may choose between process of production and consumption, or be trained for a more advanced function as a technocrat, to perfect the process, or a bureaucrat, to serve the production of commodities.



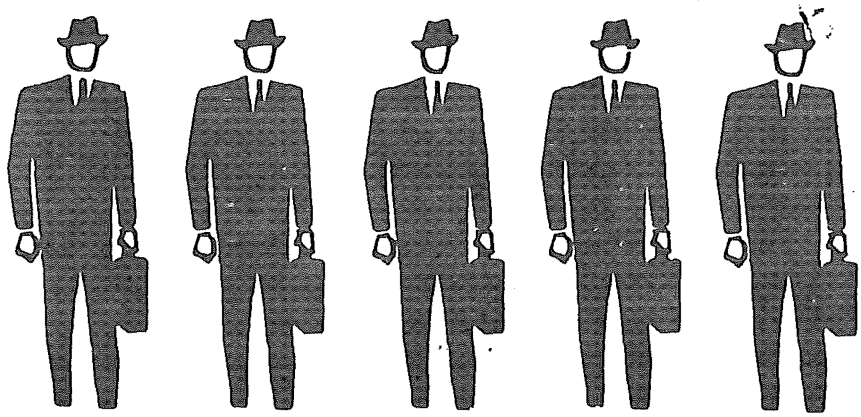
By this system of social conditioning the society seeks to perpetuate itself. The system is far more complex than we have described here, but a total understanding is not necessary to realise its function. It turns human beings into technicians for industry, bureaucrats for the government, soldiers for the army, slaves for the factories, and so on, to facilitate the mindless expansion of capital accululation, the religion of progress, the creation of artificial needs and the satisfaction of those needs, mothers and fathers to produce the next generation, and more teachers, admen, percy penguins and popstars to condition it. Society reproduces itself, modifies itself to become more perfect in its domination of the individual. When will it end?

SYMPTOMS OF AN ILLNESS

EXPLOITATION

This system is based on the exploitation of labour by capital. It is a system that stands comdemned because it offends our natural sense of justice. It is wrong not only because after giving up forty hours of our previous time every week we are given only a part of the wealth we have created but also because it has divided us up into order givers and other takers and has denied us control over our own lives and the chance of making them meaningful and beautiful.

Our aim is to expropriate the expropriaters — for the oppressed to steal back the world which they, through their labour and through the labour of previous generations, have created. We do not want "a fair day's pay for a fair day's work" we want the end of the wages sytem, the end of money and the end of the capitalist class and all their highly paid hangers on.



POWERLESSNESS

Everything is against us. It is assumed from the moment we are born to the moment we die that we must be incapable of controlling our own lives for our own benefit.

Our families are unfree for the idea of authority is everywhere and families become institutions with the kids at the bottom, the man at the top and the woman doing the housework.

Our schools are unfree. We have no control over what we learn, how, or when we learn it.

Our work is unfree. When we leave our homes in the morning we trade eight, nine or ten hours of freedom, sunshine and joy for a few measly dollars. Because we have to live we are forced to put up with dull monotonous labour in dull monotonous places and being pushed around by dull monotonous people who seem to know nothing (despite their false friendliness and use of your first name) except the job. Be careful — do too much of it and you will become a dull monotonous person too.

The products we create are unfree. They have to be paid for. Wherein the cycle is complete. The system, in order to keep going has to expand, to expand constantly it has to produce more and more products which, because it has to expand, it has to sell back, mainly to those who produce them. Western society long ago reached the stage where it could apply all the needs of its citizens but it has to keep on producing, hence built in obsolescence. Nothing is made to last because it has to be made again in a few weeks, months or years so as to keep its producers occupied (and making a profit, which is the name of the game). The main products are work and waste.

BOREDOM

"We don't want a world where the possibility of dying of hunger has been replaced with the certainty of dying of boredom".

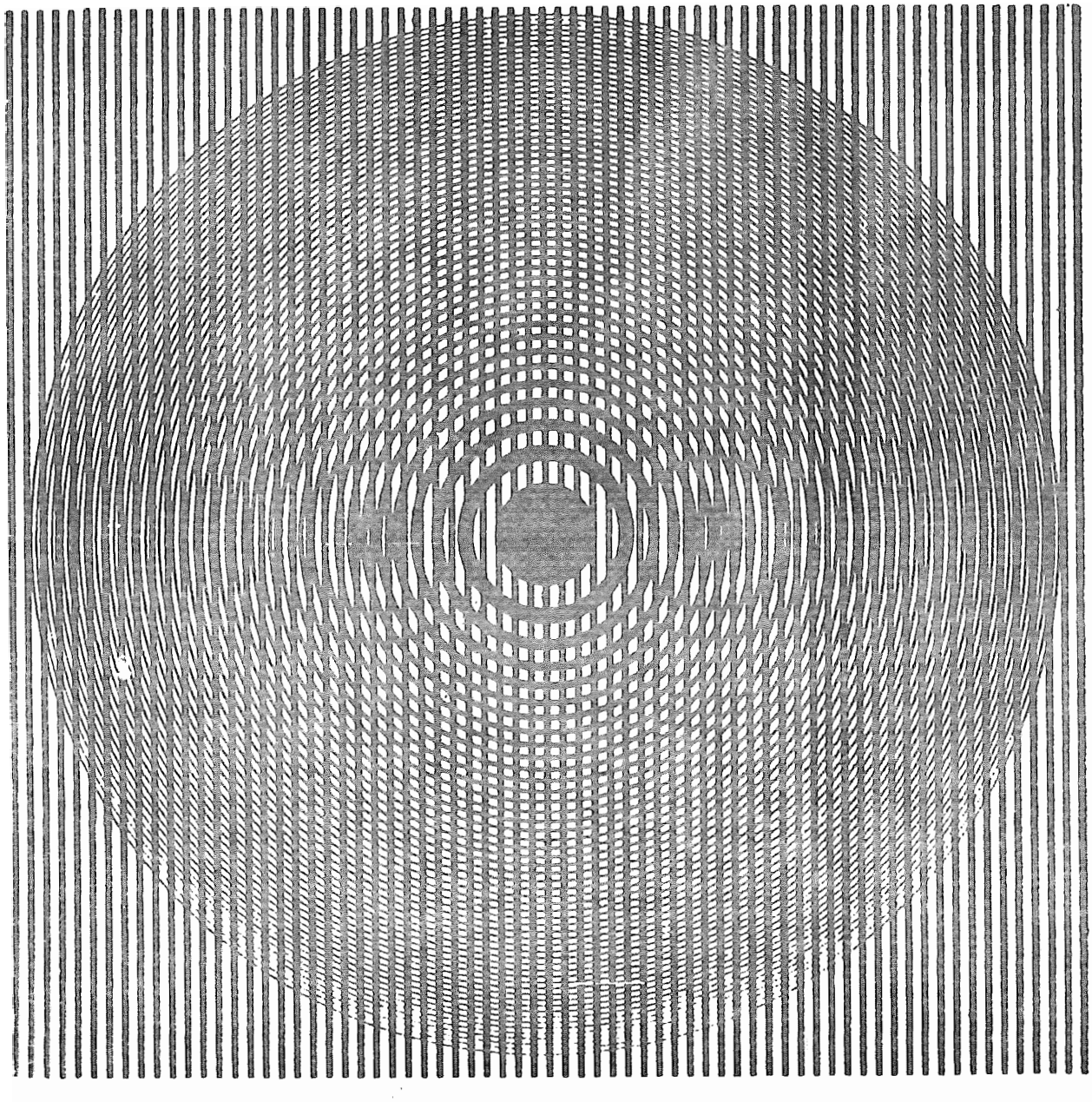
Boredom is perhaps the chief end product of the spectacular commodity society.

It is there when we have to go through the same motion every three minutes, eight hours a day, five days a week, fifty weeks a year at our places of work.

It is there with all our vast array of entertainments that do not entertain but just relieve the boredom. They cannot entertain because they are lifeless, they are not of us, the deny us participation.

We are suffering the boredom of a society that has nowhere to go (except the trash can of history), that has no reason to continue to exist, that has lost the colour it had at its inception in the bourgeois revolution, when it was opening up new horizons in production and destroying countless superstitions, such as the divine right of kings. It has lost this colour and is now with its bureaucracy and state apparatus attempting to bleach the entire world until all is dull and grey.

Colour and life must now come to us as the new revolution and by us be intensified. For only in opposition to the old order, and its superstitious like the divine right of property, only in the revolution will it be possible to find life and joy.



VIOLENCE

What about violence? This is a question we are often asked when we try to explain our vision of a society organised without authority, without a police force.

Violence is something produced by society. This can be demonstrated by the large variations between crime rates in different countries, and in the same country at different times. But crime and individual violence is only one aspect of the problem. This society's violence must also include the high infant mortality rate among Northern Territory aborigines. Why does not the CIB investigate and find out who is responsible for this crime?

The aboriginal who asked you for twenty cents the other day "Just for a cup of coffee, also is the victim of a terrible violence which has been directed against him since the day he was born. If he was unlucky, he could have been picked up for begging, causing a nuisance, or blocking the footpath. He will in this be processed by the courts and probably be put inside for a while, and this, the taking of his freedom, is another example of violence.

And we ourselves have been subjected to violence since the day we were born. The violence of authority which stunts our growth and has usurped every individual in this society, for it is impossible for an insane society to create a rational person.

People ask us, "In an anarchist society, without police, won't people go around murdering and raping each other?" This happens in this society. Look at the USA, supposedly the most advanced country in the world, where the occurrence of violent crime increases alarmingly every year. Even in some parts of Perth it is not possible to walk the streets at night in safety. Laws and police do not prevent crime, they merely provide punishment for culprits. The number of people killed by political extremists over the years is a mere drop in the ocean when compared to the millions butchered in wars waged by our governments.

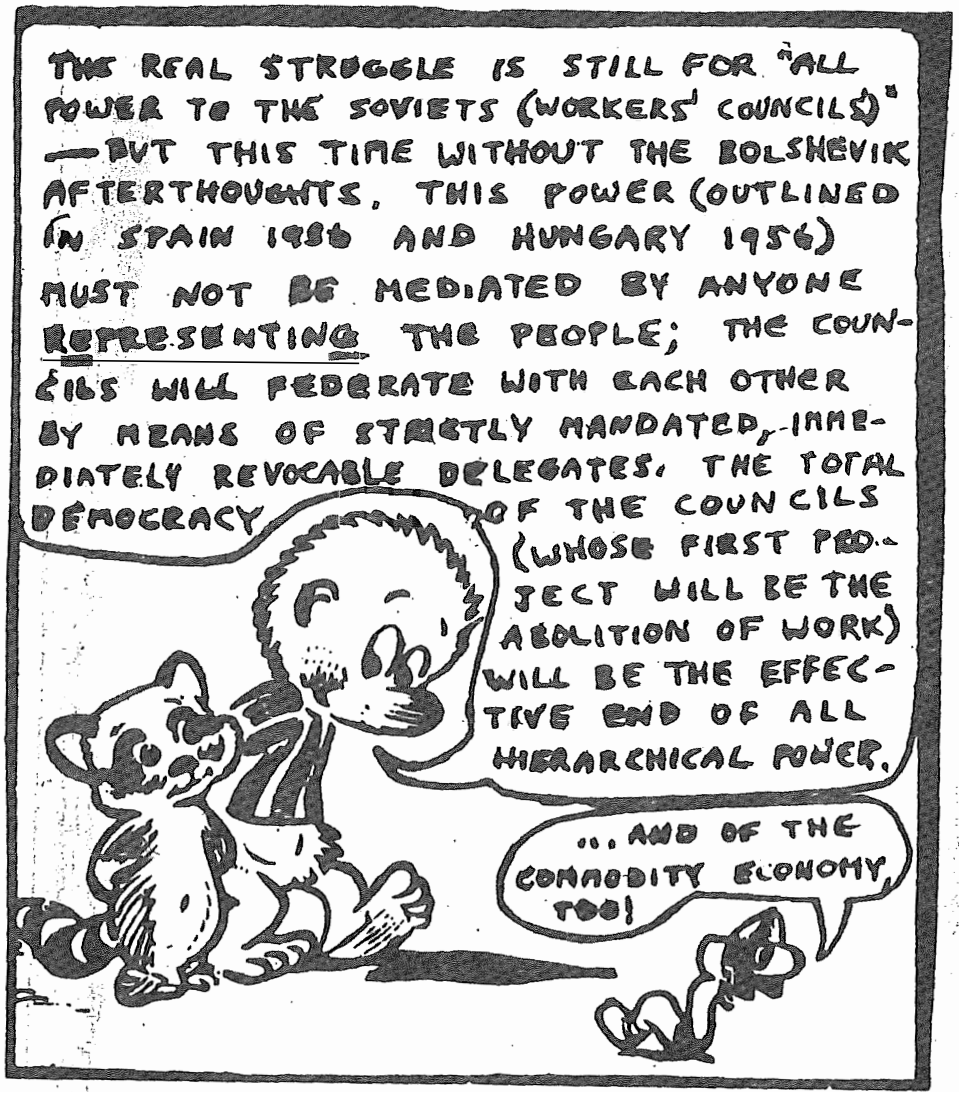
We are against violence — all violence — but we are in a violent society, and we are prepared to use violence in the struggle for our freedom. Nor will we turn our backs in horror from those that use violence against a society that is repressive and wrong. People are beautiful, guns are ugly, but the totality of the changes we wish to see brought about is difficult to imagine without violence. Not because we want it, but because history has shown us that no priviledged group gives up its priviledge without a bitter struggle, and we would not be true if we were afraid of that. If we have to pick up the gun to abolish the gun, the so be it.

Our violence is a product of a society that denies a meaningful life to its inhabitants.

Thier violence is to protect that society, to protect their own property and the priviledges that derive from it.

There is beauty in the armed struggle of the oppressed for emancipation, and violence, which we are sincerely against, can only be ended with the end of class society and authority.

THE BEGINNING --


THE REAL STRUGGLE IS STILL FOR "ALL POWER TO THE SOVIETS (WORKERS' COUNCILS)" — BUT THIS TIME WITHOUT THE BOLSHEVIK AFTERTHOUGHTS. THIS POWER (OUTLINED IN SPAIN 1936 AND HUNGARY 1956) MUST NOT BE MEDIATED BY ANYONE REPRESENTING THE PEOPLE; THE COUNCILS WILL FEDERATE WITH EACH OTHER BY MEANS OF STRICTLY MANDATED, IMMEDIATELY REVOCABLE DELEGATES. THE TOTAL DEMOCRACY OF THE COUNCILS (WHOSE FIRST PROJECT WILL BE THE ABOLITION OF WORK) WILL BE THE EFFECTIVE END OF ALL HIERARCHICAL POWER.
... AND OF THE COMMODITY ECONOMY, TOO!

Our movement is yet small, but we have begun our task. The effectiveness of a movement is determined by the number of active members. Our first task is to build our group into an effective force of committed people working at one activity or another aimed at spreading consciousness. We have a number of activities planned, such as street theatre, publishing, establishing and operating a freestore etc. but others are always welcome.

You do not have to call yourself an anarchist, a marxist, a maoist, or any other kind of "ist" to join the Self-Management Group. We are revolutionaries. We are not interested in labels, only in transforming society. The size of our taks is enormous, but if we let that discourage us we defeat ourselves immediately. If you can no longer sit idly by as the world destroys itself, join us, join the revolution.

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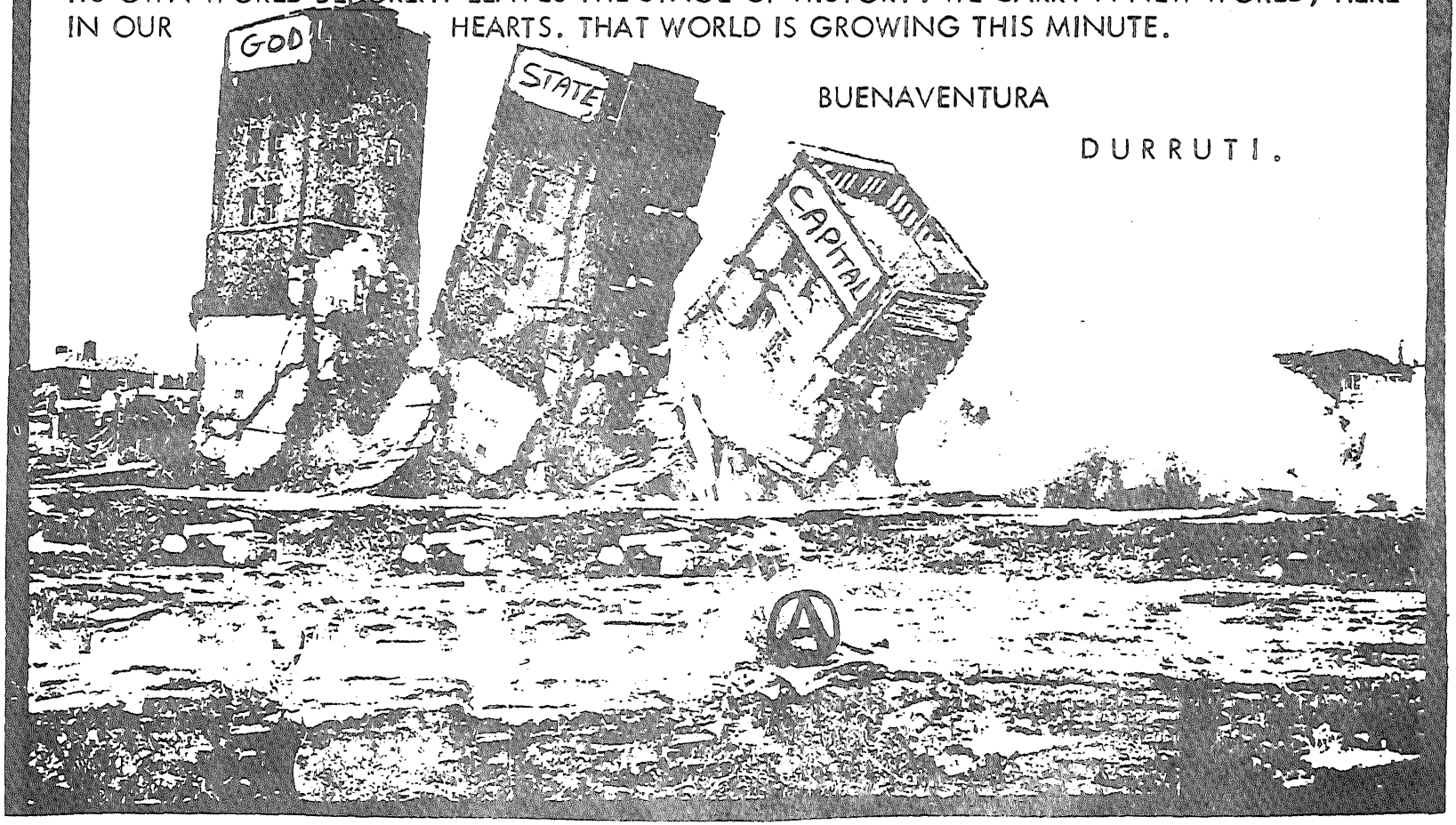
WE HAVE ALWAYS LIVED IN SLUMS AND HOLES IN THE WALL. WE WILL KNOW HOW TO ACCOMMODATE OURSELVES FOR A TIME. FOR YOU MUST NOT FORGET, WE CAN ALSO BUILD. IT IS WE WHO BUILT THESE PALACES AND CITIES HERE IN SPAIN AND IN AMERICA AND EVERYWHERE. WE, THE WORKERS, CAN BUILD OTHERS TO TAKE THEIR PLACE. AND BETTER ONES. WE ARE NOT IN THE LEAST AFRAID OF RUINS. WE ARE GOING TO INHERIT THE EARTH. THERE IS NOT THE SLIGHTEST DOUBT ABOUT THAT. THE BOURGEOISIE MIGHT BLAST AND RUIN ITS OWN WORLD BEFORE IT LEAVES THE STAGE OF HISTORY. WE CARRY A NEW WORLD, HERE IN OUR HEARTS. THAT WORLD IS GROWING THIS MINUTE.

BUENAVENTURA

DURRUTI.



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